

April 8

GENERAL VIEW
OF THE
AGRICULTURE
OF THE
COUNTY OF NAIRN.



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GENERAL VIEW
OF THE
AGRICULTURE
OF THE
COUNTY OF NAIRN,
THE
EASTERN COAST OF INVERNESS-SHIRE,
AND THE
PARISH OF DYKE, AND PART OF EDENKEILLIE,
IN THE
COUNTY OF ELGIN, AND FORRES.

BY JAMES DONALDSON,
FACTOR FOR THE HON. WILLIAM RAMSAY MAULE, OF PANMURE.

DRAWN UP FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF
THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND INTERNAL IMPROVEMENT.

K. Academies etc
LONDON:

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GENERAL VIEW
OF THE
AGRICULTURE
OF THE
COUNTY OF NAIRN
IN THE
EASTERN COAST OF SCOTLAND
PARISH OF DYKE AND PART OF EDINKILIE

For Banks

BY JAMES DONALDSON
LECTURER FOR THE AGRICULTURAL BOARD OF SCOTLAND
DRAWN UP FOR THE COMMISSIONERS OF
THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND INTERNAL IMPROVEMENT

LONDON

PRINTED BY E. MILLAR
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TO THE READER.

IT is requested that this paper may be returned to the Board of Agriculture, at its Office in London, with any additional Remarks and Observations which may occur on the perusal, written on the Margin, as soon as may be convenient.

It is hardly necessary to add, that this Report is, at present, printed and circulated for the purpose merely of procuring farther information respecting the Husbandry of this District, and of enabling every one to contribute his mite to the improvement of the country.

The Board has adopted the same plan in regard to all the other Counties in the United Kingdom; and will be happy to give every assistance in its power, to any person who may be desirous of improving his breed of Cattle, Sheep, &c. or of trying any useful Experiment in Husbandry.

London, March 1794.

TO THE READER.

I am requested that this paper may be retained to the hands of
the printer, at its Office in London, with any additional Remarks and Objections
that may occur on the subject, written on the margin, as soon as may be
convenient.

It is also requested, that this Report be printed, printed
and circulated for the purpose merely of giving further information respecting
the Proceedings of this Court, and of enabling every one to contribute his vote to
the improvement of the country.

The Board has also been requested to give a full and complete
account of the State of the Country, and of the progress of the
works, as far as they may be deemed of importance to the public of Great
Britain, and of the progress of the works in the Colonies.

London, March 1791.

COUNTY OF NAIRN, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

THE tract of country proposed to be described, lying towards the 58° of N. latitude, comprehends the parish of Dyke, and part of Edenkeillie, in the county of Moray, the whole of the county of Nairn, and the eastern coast of Inverness-shire, to the mouth of the river Beaulie, from whence the extent along the Moray Frith, its northern boundary to the river Findhorn, is forty English miles. The county of Nairn stretches from the coast southerly to Lochindorb, about twenty miles, where it terminates nearly in a point between the counties of Elgin and Inverness. Its breadth along the shore is twelve miles; its sides extend to twenty two miles about the middle, from whence they begin to approximate each other. Exclusive of the hilly part of the district, it may be described as a narrow border of level ground along the shore, from one to nearly six miles in breadth.

RIVERS.

1st, The river Beaulie, issuing from Loch Monar, in the western hills of Ross-shire, terminates the Moray Frith at Lovat, after a course of nearly sixty miles.

2d, The river Ness. Descriptions of the course of this river are already before the public*, and the practicability of opening a communication to the Western Ocean, at Fort William, by joining Loch Ness to Loch Eoich, and that to Loch Lochy, and thence to the sea, has been satisfactorily establish-

* By Dr. ANDERSON, and others.

ed ; therefore it is only necessary to notice here, that this river forms the harbour at the town of Inverness.

3d, The water of Nairn takes its rise in the hills of Inverness-shire, and after a course of nearly thirty miles, falls into the Frith at the town of Nairn. It is of little consequence, forming no harbour, and for salmon fishings yielding only a rent of about 80l. sterling.

SOIL AND CLIMATE.

The soil of this district lying under a climate almost as favourable as any in the kingdom, appears to be of three qualities. From the river Findhorn to the water of Nairn, comprehending the parishes of Dyke and Auldearn, the soil is a rich free loam, generally on a sandy or gravelly bottom.

From Nairn to Inverness, comprehending the parishes of Nairn, Airdseer, Calder, Croy, Petty, and part of Inverness, it is a light sandy soil; and from the river Ness to Beaulie, including the low part of the parish of Inverness, and the parish of Kirk-hill, the soil is either a stiff rich clay, or a sharp gravelly mould.

In the hilly part of the county of Nairn, the arable land is but in a small proportion to the waste; the soil is a sandy loam, full of gravel and small stones, except on the banks of the brooks, where it appears less mixed. In this quarter the climate is more cold and stormy than on the coast, and the productions of the soil are somewhat later. Yet the crops are never cut off by frost, nor is the harvest greatly more retarded by the autumnal rains than that of their neighbours in the more favourable situations.

There is a curious singularity connected with the soil of this district, namely, the sand which has nearly overwhelmed the estate of Cowbin, and which happened some time prior to the Act of Parliament 1695, cap. 30, the narrative of which bears,

bears, " That the barony of Cowbin, and house and yards thereof, is quite ruined, and overspread with sand."

It appears that the sand washed up for ages by the tide on the coast towards the western limits of the parish of Dyke, was at last drifted by a storm of wind from the west, over the estate; one farm of which, now rented at about 80*l.* alone remains, from which the land-tax and other public exactions are paid for an estate rated at nearly 1000*l.* Scots, of valued rent, and which at present would probably, but for this accident, have rented at 800*l.* sterling a year, or upwards.

The extent of this calamity is not limited to the barony of Cowbin; it changed the efflux of the river Findhorn, by which a part of the estate of Maurton was destroyed, and drifting eastward for more than ten miles, buried a great extent of fine land in the parish of Duffus. But although this evil has not been felt on the east side of the river Findhorn during the present generation, yet its consequences are in a high degree to be feared. Besides the large extent of plain which it occupies, to the height, it is supposed, of the fruit-trees in the garden of Cowbin, a vast body is accumulated in a ridge of hills, called the hills of Mavistone, of strikingly conspicuous magnitude; these hills are observed to be gradually progressive, the sand drifting from the west, and settling on the lee of the east end. And there is reason to believe, that during the course of the last forty or fifty years, it has advanced eastward more than 100 yards.

Besides extending and promoting the growth of bent, a vegetable so peculiar to this soil, the landlords who are exposed to this dreadful visitation might certainly adopt some plan for fixing the sand within its present bounds. But it is neglected by all concerned, as if its encroachments were not to be apprehended, or as if they were in no degree prejudicial.

The periods of wheat seed time and harvest which commenced on a particular farm in the neighbourhood of Inver-

ness for the last four years, as stated below, will shew the earliness of the season.

Wheat seed commenced in	-	1790,	9th November.	
-	-	1791,	4th November.	
-	-	1792,	1st September.	
-	-	1793,	19th October.	
Oats and peas seed commenced in	-	1791,	2d March.	
-	-	1792,	3d March.	
-	-	1793,	20th February.	
Barley seed commenced in	-	1791,	16th April.	
-	-	1792,	10th April.	
-	-	1793,	16th April.	
Harvest commenced on the same	}	1790,	6th Sept. & finished	19th Oct.
farm in		1791,	27th Aug.	1st Oct.
-		1792,	30th Aug.	9th Oct.
-		1793,	5th Sept.	16th Oct.

TOWNS, POPULATION, AND MANUFACTURES.

In this district there are two royal burghs, Inverness and Nairn, situated at the distance of eighteen miles from each other. The population of the town of Inverness amounts to 5257, and that of Nairn to 1400; there are also three villages, Dyke, Auldearn, and Campbeltown, which may contain from 50 to 100 houses in each.

There is a thread manufactory at Inverness, from which, on an average of the last seven years, there has been exported in white and coloured threads, to the extent of 13,000l. sterling yearly. There is also a canvas and sail-cloth manufactory established there, from whence is exported annually upwards of 300,000 yards.

There is another species of manufacture carried on to a considerable extent in this district, that of the spinning of yarn. The flax is sent here by the merchants in Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Paisley, and returned to them in yarn. There is also a considerable quantity of timber and merchant goods carried

carried in open boats along the coast, to Caithness and the Orkney islands.

From the port of Inverness there is exported annually raw wool to the value of 500*l.* sterling, and skins or peltry to the amount of 1200*l.*; but these last articles are the produce of the counties of Inverness, Nairn, and Ross-shire, at large.

Though there is a great quantity of grain annually exported from that extent of coast, under the jurisdiction of the custom-house of Inverness, yet the quantity exported from the district now under review is very inconsiderable, the grain that can be spared by the farmers being in general requisite for the maintenance of the inhabitants of the towns and villages, and of those of the more remote parts of the Highlands.

In the town of Nairn, though pleasantly and commodiously situated on the banks of the river, near the shore of the Frith, and having the advantage of the great north road passing through it, there are no manufactures of any kind: some of the respectable inhabitants of the town seem extremely anxious to introduce some manufactories, in order to give employment to the inhabitants; and were the proprietors of the county to give their aid, there is little doubt but this desirable object might be attained.

To the nine parishes already mentioned, that only of Ardclach, in the hilly part of the county of Nairn, remains to be added, and the whole population, exclusive of the troops occasionally resident in Fort George, amounts to a little above twenty thousand.

STATE OF PROPERTY.

In this district there are six proprietors, having each from 1000*l.* to 2500*l.* sterling a year; and twelve more, having each from 200*l.* to 800*l.* a year; the remainder, including the burgh lands of Inverness and Nairn, is divided into small estates, under 200*l.* sterling a year, amounting in all to 16,000*l.*

sterling of yearly rent, exclusive of the rent of the salmon fishings of Beaulie, Ness, and Nairn, which amount to 1870l. sterling.

LAND, RENT, AND TENOR OF LEASES.

Although the greater part of the proprietors reside in the district, yet it is plain that very little attention on their part has been bestowed in promoting the improvement of the lands occupied by the tenants: such of the heritors, however, as reside on their estates, have carried the improvements of their own farms as high as the generality of the kingdom.

Mr. DAVIDSON of Cantray, has in every particular extended his attention in the most judicious and successful manner, beyond his own farm, over the whole of his estate, which he found, about twenty years ago, when he came to reside there, bleak, poor and sterile in the extreme; but it has now assumed an appearance of neatness and fertility superior to any other in that part of the district.

There is but a very small proportion of this country possessed by the tenants under leases in writing; scarcely one-tenth of the whole. Some of the leases are of endurance for seven years, others for eleven years, and a few for two nineteen years; but the greatest number are for nineteen years. There is no rotation of cropping laid down in the leases, nor (with a very few exceptions) is there any provision made as to draining, inclosing, or leaving the lands in good condition at the end of the lease.

The general run of the farms pay from 15l. to 20l. of yearly rent, burdened however in many cases with services, carriages, mill restrictions, and a variety of small exactions in kind, called *customs*. There are, however, a few farms of from one to three hundred acres.

Tenants

Tenants enter into possession of houses, gardens and natural pasture, at the term of Whitsunday, and to the arable land at the ingathering of that year's crop.

The rents are paid partly in money, in grain, and in oatmeal; the money rent is paid at Martinmas, after reaping the crop, and the victual in March or April thereafter. It should be remarked here, that the tenants on some estates in this district are obliged to pay their farm meal at the rate of nine stone and a half, and sometimes ten stone for the boll, a practice, it is believed, little known in any other part of the kingdom.

The average rent by the acre over the whole district, exclusive of the natural pasturage, may be estimated at 13s. from which, however, the lands about the burghs of Inverness and Nairn, and around the villages above-mentioned, are to be excepted, where in some cases the rents have risen from 2l. to nearly 5l. the acre.

THE MODE OF MANAGEMENT, AND IMPROVEMENTS OF HUSBANDRY.

Although the proprietors, and the few more opulent and intelligent farmers, have introduced fallow, green crops, and sown grass into their practice, yet no stated or regular rotation of cropping is here followed, unless that ancient system which seems to have been the general practice before the era of the Reformation, and which is still almost universally practised here by the ordinary and inferior class of tenants, should be accounted a regular rotation. Almost the whole of this country being uninclosed, the tenants are still accommodated with natural pasturage for their cattle, either in the downs along the shore, or in the moors towards the bottom of the mountains. On this account a very small proportion of the arable land is considered as requisite for the pasture of the

the stock on the small farms, a part of which, almost on every farm, consists of a small flock of sheep. These are shut up in the house every night, the floor of which is from time to time thickly covered with a bed of turf or sand, so as to form a kind of compost dung-hill, equal in surface to the area of the house, and from two to about four feet in depth. Besides this, the dung afforded by the black cattle and horses is also formed into a compost dung-hill, of which about three-fourths is generally *pure sand*, the least earthy and of largest particles being universally preferred. Of these two there must be amassed in the course of the year such a quantity as is sufficient to spread over one fourth of the farm, which, after three ploughings, is generally sown with Scots bear, at the rate of four firlots to the acre, between the middle of May and the middle of June. And this, with the exception of a portion allowed for potatoes, and occasionally a small patch in flax, for domestic accommodation, is uniformly succeeded by two or three successive crops of oats; the oats sown between the first week of March and the last week of April, and after one ploughing, which is performed during the winter, or at the time of sowing, and four firlots of seed is allowed to the acre; and if the land, under this management, becomes so much over-run with weeds of different kinds as not to return double the seed, which is not unfrequently the case, it is allowed to lye waste for one or two years, during which it is pastured by the cows and horses, and again brought under cultivation, and treated in the same manner as above described.

On the large farms, and on such lands as are occupied by the proprietors, and where fallow green crops and sown grass are introduced into the system, the most improved and judicious mode of managing the dung, and laying down the different crops, prevail.

The system adopted by the generality of farmers, as above described, is the necessary result of their having no certain leases; and although, before the depreciation of the value of money

money by its increased abundance in the present age, this system might have afforded the comforts of life suited to the ideas of the times, yet it is a system which at the present day uniformly condemns its followers to all the evils of poverty, and consequently prevents them from possessing the means or the inclination for improvement.

This becomes conspicuous by the mere inspection only of their extremely imperfect implements of agriculture, which, with very few exceptions, are fabricated by the tenants themselves. It is unnecessary to describe the clumsy awkwardness of the plough, in the construction of which there is comparatively very little iron employed. The carts are framed on a form still further from perfection: the wheels, about two feet diameter, are composed only of three pieces of plank two or three inches thick, having square holes in the centre to receive the axle, which must therefore turn round with the wheels, moving in wooden bows fixed under the body of the cart. The shafts are formed of the larger, and the body of the carriage of bars or slender batons of the smaller branches of the alder tree. It not being intended to recommend this model for imitation, it is needless to describe the straw collar, the saddle, or the timber crupper, or to calculate the inferiority of the power of the horses in such contemptible harness, or the difference between the load which is drawn and that which might be drawn by the same horses in a cart and harness of more perfect construction.

It is only further necessary to mention the kellach sledge, a conical basket framed of twigs, supported with its base uppermost between the shafts and two cross bars, by which the shafts are connected, which is still commonly used, and which is sometimes drawn without wheels of any kind.

On the farms of the proprietors, and on the large farms, ploughs, carts, harrows, and every other implement employed in the field, are constructed on the best principles, and in the most perfect manner.

LABOUR-

LABOURERS, AND THE EXPENCE OF LABOUR.

Though there are no manufactures in this district, besides those already mentioned, yet the price of labour has nearly doubled in the course of the last twenty years: this perhaps may be accounted for by the great number of both sexes in that class going to the south of Scotland, in order to procure work in summer and harvest, from whence they return with such a stock of money in their pockets, as enables them to spend the winter with some degree of comfort.

The wages of an ordinary ploughman, exclusive of bed and board, are from 5*l.* to 6*l.* sterling a year, and those of a female servant from 1*l.* 15*s.* to 2*l.* 5*s.*; labourers by the day have seven-pence or eight-pence and their victuals.

A man engaged for the harvest, which generally lasts six weeks, receives 1*l.* and a woman from 14*s.* to 17*s.*

The farm servants, with few exceptions, lodge and eat in the family; they are maintained nearly in the same manner, though at a much less expence, than those in the county of Moray, as was more fully described in the report of that district. Potatoes, and the small herrings which are caught in great quantities in the Frith, supply a great proportion of the food of the poorer people, servants and labourers.

ROADS AND BRIDGES.

In the report of the county of Moray, the convenience, practicability and expence of erecting a bridge across the river Findhorn, was pretty fully detailed; it is only further necessary here to add, that if this interesting improvement were by any means obtained, the course of the post-road through this district could be conducted in a line much more advantageous to the inhabitants and to the public at large; and it is humbly suggested, that the best possible direction, both in regard to a proper

proper level, and to every other object which ought to be attended to in a work of this kind, would be to carry this road from the proposed bridge to be built across the Findhorn, by the north side of the Earl of MORAY's plantations at Darnway, along the south side of the moss of Litie, through the lands of Auldearn, and from thence to the bridge over the water of Nairn, on the military road to Fort George; from thence through the inclosures of Kilravock, holding westward to the church of Croy, until it meet the present highway about a mile farther west.

There are several advantages which would be gained by this direction of the road: the rivulet called the burn of Dalvey, could never impede the traveller so near its source as Earl's Mill, where at any rate a bridge could be afforded from the public funds of the county.

But what would be of much more advantage to the inhabitants of the country, is, that this direction of the post road would open up an immediate and direct communication through the most valuable tract of arable land in the district: the advantages of this need not be pointed out, even to any farmer of ordinary observation, or of common understanding; yet from these obvious advantages this part of the country is entirely debarred by the present course of the post road, which is directed on the outside of the country; and excepting part of the parish of Dyke, and the town of Nairn, it is conducted along the most sterile and the most thinly inhabited tract in the low part of the district.

The direction of the road here pointed out, would open to all the country an easy and ready access to an almost inexhaustible fund of rich pure marl, which has been hitherto locked up in the moss of Litie; and another quarter of the country would be hereby also equally enriched, by a similar access to the marl pits lately opened at Kinstarie.

The military road from Strathspey to Fort George, by Dalsy bridge, has been lately completed in the most masterly manner,

manner, insomuch that it is not easy to form an idea that there is any thing further required for its improvement; and much credit is certainly due to those under whose directions this work was planned and executed.

The other roads were made and repaired under the authority of the Act of Parliament 1669: of them it is only necessary to observe, that they merit no commendation, and that they remain susceptible of great improvements, which might certainly be effected even under this Act of Parliament, if proper attention was paid by those who are charged with the execution of this branch of police.

The landholders in Inverness-shire have lately applied for and obtained an Act of Parliament, for levying conversion money in lieu of labour, and for making and repairing highways and bridges in that shire, by which means it is to be hoped both the public and parochial roads will in a few years be put in a proper state of repair.

MARKETS AND FAIRS.

In the towns of Inverness and Nairn there are regular weekly markets, where butcher meat, meal, butter, cheese, poultry, eggs, and such articles, are sold, and where also considerable quantities of fuel is brought for sale by the poorer tenants in the neighbourhood; and from the sale of such articles these tenants are on the other hand supplied with salt, and such other articles as they consider necessary; and by this means also, a part of their money rent is scraped together.

Butcher meat and fish, though still moderate compared to the prices in other parts of the kingdom, have, notwithstanding, of late years advanced very considerably in this district.

Butcher meat sells at from 2 d. to 3 d. the pound, haddocks from 6 d. to 1 s. the dozen, poultry 6 d. each, ducks 7 d. or 8 d. geese from 1 s. 6 d. to 2 s. and turkeys 3 s. each; eggs about 2 d. the dozen.

The

The average price of grain and oatmeal for the last seven years, will be seen by the annexed fiars of the county of Inverness and Nairn.

FIARS OF INVERNESS-SHIRE FOR THE CROPS 1786 AND 1792, AND THE INTERMEDIATE CROPS AND YEARS.													
Year.	Wheat.		Barley.		Peas.		Oats & Oatmeal.		Peas.		Beans.		Rye.
	f.	d.	f.	d.	f.	d.	f.	d.	f.	d.	f.	d.	
1786	1	0	0	17	0	15	0	15	0	15	0	15	0
1787	1	0	0	17	0	16	0	15	0	15	0	15	0
1788	1	0	0	17	0	13	6	13	0	13	0	13	0
1789	1	0	0	17	0	13	6	13	0	13	0	13	0
1790	1	0	0	17	0	13	6	13	0	13	0	13	0
1791	1	0	0	17	0	13	6	13	0	13	0	13	0
1792	1	0	0	17	0	14	0	14	0	14	0	14	0

FIARS OF NAIRN-SHIRE FOR THE CROPS 1786 AND 1792, AND THE INTERMEDIATE CROPS AND YEARS.

In Inverness there are seven fairs during the course of the year, in which black cattle, horses, sheep, implements of husbandry, and country commodities, are sold. At these fairs the country people from the remotest parts of the North and West Highlands are in the practice of providing themselves with those articles which they must necessarily have; and which is generally done by the barter of their butter, cheese, peltry, and such other merchandize as their situation enables them to bring to market.

In the town of Nairn there are also six stated fairs in the year, in which business similar to that of Inverness fairs is negotiated to a certain extent. But as Inverness lyes on the one side, and Forres on the other, and both better situated for a trade of this kind, the stated fairs which are held in the town of Nairn are comparatively of little consequence, as the inhabitants of a small corner of the country only attend them.

FARM HOUSES AND OFFICES.

The few farmers who possess what are here considered as extensive farms, are well accommodated with houses. They are built in a substantial manner, of stone and lime, and either slated, or thatched with straw; they appear sufficiently commodious and properly situated; but it must be observed, that they are in general built at the tenant's expence. He is obliged to lay out the money in the first instance, and the proprietor is only bound by the lease to allow him a certain proportion of the expence at his removal. If the value of the houses should exceed the sum stipulated in the lease, by the custom of the country, it is left optional to the tenant either to carry off the surplus value, or to bargain with his successor on such terms as they may agree upon, or as two men to be mutually chosen by them, may determine.

The habitations of the poorer tenants in the district, however, are mean, dark and dirty cottages built of turf, without order

order or connexion with each other. The proprietor in general affords what is called the great timber, and the tenant is at the expence of cutting the turf and erecting the fabric. The district is by no means destitute of stone, and therefore, by a little expence and attention on the part of the proprietors, and of those who have the management of their estates, this class of people might be accommodated with lodgings much warmer and more healthy than those in which they are at present obliged to reside.

In the villages above-mentioned, the houses are in general built of stone, and slated, or properly thatched either with straw, or with bent from the downs along the shore.

LIVE STOCK.

It will be naturally inferred from the preceding account of the state of the country, and from the system of husbandry generally practised, that there is but little attention paid to the improvement of stock, and that they must be comparatively of little value.

Black Cattle.—Agreeable to the ancient practice, which was taken notice of in the agricultural report of Moray, oxen are still for the most part employed in the plough on the ordinary sized farms; and when the seed season is over, towards the end of June, they are generally boarded for about three months, at the rate of from 1s. 3d. to 1s. 6d. each, in the glens and mountains in the Highlands. Their pile, by this management, is no doubt much improved, but the labour requisite to procure their food, and the cold to which they are exposed, is not very favourable to the other qualifications which are regarded in the species; yet the breed remains unmixed, neither crossed with the Lancashire or Dutch, and exhibit when in flesh, a more handsome figure than the herds of the county of Moray. They are, however, of a smaller bone,

bone, weighing when fat only from 18 to 24 stone, Amsterdam. The number in this district amounts to upwards of 11,000, and when three years old, the general value may be estimated at from 2*l.* 15*s.* to 3*l.* each.

Horses.—In this report it is unnecessary to take notice of the farm horses belonging to the proprietors and the more opulent farmers, because they are nearly equal in height and value to the horses in other parts of the kingdom where two horse ploughs have been introduced.

The horses which are reared by the most attentive farmers in the middling and lower classes, are generally from seven to nine hands high, and when five or six years old, they sell at from 7*l.* to 10*l.* sterling. There are, however, a number of horses in the district, which do not sell when in their prime for much above the half of these prices. The number of horses of all kinds in the district is nearly 4000, and the average price when five years old, may be from 7*l.* to 8*l.*

Sheep.—It has been observed, that a certain number of this species of stock is to be seen on all the small farms. They are almost without exception of the small white faced kind, and appear to be the original breed of the country. A score of wedders taken from the flock, without particular selection in regard to size, sell, about the end of harvest, when fattest, at from 6*l.* to 7*l.* the score, at which season such wedders weigh from six to eight pounds the quarter. The wool is for the most part manufactured in the family, for bed-clothes and apparel. When sold at Inverness or Nairn, the price is about 8*s.* the stone. The whole number is about 18,500, and the medium price may be about five shillings.

DRAINS.

From the preceding description of the soil of this district, it will be understood that the arable lands are in general dry.

In

In the country called the *Aird*, of which the parish of Kirk-hill is a part, where the soil is a deep rich clay, open drains properly constructed would be a great improvement, as appears from the good effects of those already made.

In this district there are several small lakes, some consisting of marshy, and others of mossy ground, that might be easily cleared of water, yet in general the inducement to lay out the requisite expence must be the expectation of finding marl, rather than making any addition to the corn fields. In the parish of Kirk-hill, however, a considerable acquisition of arable land might be gained at a small expence, by draining the lake, or loch of Conan. Another improvement of more consequence might be effected, and a great extent of the most valuable land in the district brought into a state of cultivation, were an embankment to be formed along the shore of the Frith, from the mouth of the river Beaulie to the estate of Warrandfield, so as to secure this extensive tract, consisting of several hundred acres, from being overflowed or injured by the Moray Frith. One gentleman, Major FRASER of Bel-ladrum, who rents a farm here from the Hon. Mr. FRASER of Lovat, the proprietor of all these grounds along the shore, has done a great deal in order to secure his farm, and has thereby evinced the practicability of converting the whole of this plain, the greatest part of which is now in a state of nature, into rich arable corn fields. It is to be hoped the proprietor will study his own interest, and that of the country at large, by following out the plan so judiciously and so successfully begun by Major FRASER.

But an improvement of still greater consequence, and more extensively useful to the country, might be made at an expence comparatively small, were Mr. CAMPBELL of Calder to drain the moss of Litie, in which, it is already ascertained, there is an almost inexhaustible stock of rich pure marl. Those only who are acquainted with the improvements which have been effected in Strathmore, and in other parts of the
county

county of Angus, by the use of this valuable manure, can form any judgment of the advantages which must necessarily result to this gentleman and to the neighbouring proprietors, were this moss drained, and marl brought into general use as a manure. Except on the estate of Cantray, there are no lime quarries in the district, and the expence of importing lime from the Frith of Forth, or the north of England, amounts almost to a prohibition, at least insomuch that there is little chance of this species of manure ever coming into general use in this district. On that account therefore, the opening of this store of marl becomes an object of still greater importance. As an inducement to Mr. CAMPBELL to execute this important work, it may not be improper here to state, that a gentleman in Angus, Mr. DEMPSTER of Durnichen, whose spirited exertions to promote the good of his country are so well known as to require no commentary here, a few years ago drained a lake on his estate in which marl had been discovered, and the last year cleared upwards of 900*l.* sterling, after paying all expences.

There is indeed just now some thousand bolls of very good marl lying ready for market on Mr. GORDON's estate of Kinstarie; but even the most intelligent tenants in that neighbourhood seem totally ignorant of the value of this new discovered treasure, and have not yet had resolution to make one single experiment of its effects, even though sufficient proofs have been afforded them, by the greatest crops of corn, grass and turnips produced thereby on Mr. GORDON's own farm. It is however certain, that both these gentlemen, as well as the other proprietors in the neighbourhood, have it in their power, by the leases which they grant in future, of obliging their tenants to use marl as a manure, and if this is done, under proper regulations (which ought to be very carefully attended to, and which will probably be detailed in the report of the county of Angus) it is evident that it is the best security they can have for the improvement of their estates, and the punctual payment of their rents.

WOODS

WOODS AND PLANTATIONS.

Although this district is by no means destitute of wood, yet its general appearance, except for two or three miles west of the river Findhorn, and about Inverness, seems bleak and naked, and as the plantations are in general situated in the higher parts of the country, it is evident they afford no shelter to the arable lands. It would certainly add much to the beauty of the country, as well as improvement in regard to climate, were the proprietors to plant the rising grounds which are intermixed with the corn fields, but inaccessible to the plough. Of such there are a great many all over the country, particularly on the estates of Culloden, Castle Stewart, and Kinstarie. The proprietors of the parish of Inverness have adopted this plan, and if they proceed for a few years, it is probable there will not be a single useless acre in that parish. It must be observed also, that every proprietor's family seat in the district is ornamented with plantations, containing every species of forest trees.

Extensive plantations, though principally of Scots fir, are to be seen on almost every estate in the higher part of the country, and on some of the moors in the low country; and Mr. DAVIDSON of Cantray has within these twenty years planted upwards of two thousand acres. The country at present not only supplies itself, but also a considerable part of the adjoining county of Elgin and Forres, with timber for the ordinary implements of husbandry, and for the buildings and furniture of the country people; and there is no doubt but in a few years the export of timber from this district will be an article of considerable value.

It would be improper in a report of this kind, not to take particular notice of the Earl of MORAY's extensive forests on his estate of Darnway, and of those also on his Lordship's estate of Castle Stewart.

These are of very great extent, covering upwards of 3600 Scots acres, all within the district under review. Of this

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extent

extent the greatest part lyes in the parish of Edenkellie, and part in that of Dyke, stretching along the banks of the Findhorn, and forming an immense circle round the ancient Castle of Darnway. The remainder, about 600 acres, lyes in the parish of Petty, near to Castle Stewart. They were begun by the present Earl in the year 1767. The Scots fir is used for nursing up and sheltering the more valuable kinds of deciduous trees, of which the oak is the principal object of attention. These are planted among the firs at the distances at which they are intended to stand when full grown; and as soon as the firs have performed this office, they are to be altogether taken away, so that the whole will form a noble forest of oaks intermixed with the other valuable deciduous trees. In some of the older plantations the firs are already completely cut out, and exhibit forest scenes vastly superior to that of the gloomy Scots fir so frequent in Scotland. Every attention has been paid to the preservation and proper thinning of these plantations, and the natural consequence has been, that they have thrived extremely, many of them, about nineteen years old, measuring about twenty inches in girth at three feet from the ground. The firs are planted out at two years old from the seed bed, and when of size sufficient to afford proper shelter, pits are made amongst them, into which the oaks and other trees are planted, often standing two years in the seed bed, and three or four years in the nursery. To shew with what spirit these plantations have been carried on, it may be proper to mention, that in one season, viz. between Autumn 1782 and Summer 1783, no fewer than 75,000 oaks were planted out. From the failure in England of the acorn crop sometimes for two or three seasons following, it is impossible to make the progress which could be wished, in filling up these extensive plantations with oaks, as all the young plants are raised in the Earl's own gardens at Darnway. An exact register being kept of all the trees annually planted out, a copy of the amount of each class has been obtained, which is here subjoined.

Oaks

Oaks planted between November 1767 and Summer 1793	}	614,500
Ash, beech, elm, sycamore, Spanish chesnut, spruce firs and larix, during same period	}	336,500
Scots firs betwixt November 1767 and Summer 1787	}	9,687,000
Total		10,638,000

A period of many years will be requisite for filling up these extensive plantations with oaks, but the work is going regularly forward.

The thinnings of the firs are sold from two-pence to four-pence per dozen; but the demand of the country is not equal to the quantities necessarily taken out. A few years ago a part of them were carried by sea to Newcastle and Sunderland, for the use of the coal-works in that neighbourhood.

On the opposite banks of the Findhorn a similar mode of planting has been followed by Mr. CUMIN of Nelugas, and since 1779 above two hundred acres have been covered, and about 80,000 oaks planted out.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS,

AND

HINTS FOR IMPROVEMENT.

The means of improvement have been hinted at in general, or may be inferred from the state of the country as already described. It is obvious that this district is in general more backward in the state of agriculture, and in the condition of the common people, than their neighbours to the southward. It is also obvious, that the arable land, by judicious management, might be rendered greatly more productive, and that the value of the cattle, horses and sheep, might be increased many-fold.

It is however not to be supposed, that any lasting and general improvement can be on a sudden, or all at once, introduced into any country, even although the landlords were to bestow their united and best directed efforts for that purpose. It must be many years before the land, under the management of the country people, can be brought into the most improved condition of which it is susceptible. The proprietors, however, ought not to be discouraged, for it is evident that they may in a few years, by proper attention, bring about a surprizing alteration in the state of things, and in the appearance of the country. In order to effectuate this, it appears necessary to enlarge the farms to an extent sufficient for the employment of a reasonable capital, which should be applied in the cultivation of the farm only, without being directed to other purposes, such as building houses, or inclosing the farm, the expence of which should be advanced by the proprietor, on a moderate interest to be paid by the tenant.

One objection only can be stated against the propriety of enlarging the farms, and that is the removing the present set of tenants; but this certainly might be obviated, were the proprietors to feu out some detached corners of their estates properly situated in regard to fuel and water, and introduce some manufactures to give employment to the people. They would in that case live much more comfortably than they do at present, and at the same time become more useful members of the state. It may be unnecessary to repeat, that no spirited cultivation of land can be performed by the poor inhabitants of a dark damp smoaky hovel, when it is further considered that the labouring cattle are still more wretchedly accommodated.

The want of leases must be an insurmountable bar to improvements in agriculture.

In countries highly cultivated, where the inclosures are completed, and regular rotations of cropping introduced, a lease of nineteen years is considered both by proprietor and tenant

as a reasonable period; but in such a country as this, where so much rests with the tenant to perform, it might be highly proper to add eight or ten years more to this duration, so that the tenant may be satisfied he can reap the fruits of his own labour, skill and improvements, without the fear of being turned out by another.

From the consideration that all people are extremely reluctant to quit old habits, and to venture on untried experiments, perhaps it might be proper that the first leases which are granted, should oblige the holders to have a certain proportion of the farm in fallow, clover, and turnip.

Were regular rotations of cropping to be adopted, the following appears likely to turn out the most advantageous for that part of the district from Findhorn to Inverness.

First year—Turnip, land dunged.

Second year—Barley, with 8lb. white and 8lb. red clover, 4 lb. rib-grass, and one and a half or two bushels of rye-grass.

Third year—Grass to be made into hay.

Fourth year—Grass to be pastured.

Fifth year—Grass to be pastured.

Sixth year—Grass to be pastured.

Seventh year—Oats.

Eighth year—Barley.

In the low part of the parish of Kirk-hill, where the soil and climate are nearly equal to that of the Carse of Gowrie, the same rotation of cropping which after many years experience is now considered the most advantageous there, might be introduced into this part of the district with great propriety, and is as follows:

First year—Fallow, the land dunged.

Second year—Wheat.

Third year—Pease or beans.

Fourth year—Barley, with 20lb. red clover, and one bushel rye-grass.

Fifth year—Grass.

Sixth year—Oats.

But

But no regular rotation of cropping can be adopted in any country, unless the fields are laid out in proper order; and where pasture grass makes part of the system, it is absolutely necessary that the farm should be inclosed, and subdivided. In this country in general, that can only be done by thorn hedges, as stone fences could only be erected on particular estates where quarries abound. From every information that could be procured, there is reason to believe, that were the proprietors to grant leases for twenty one or twenty seven years, many of the tenants would cheerfully concur with them in bearing a proportion of the expence of rearing and protecting hedges, and also agree to pay interest for the money expended in making these inclosures.

Besides the other advantages of inclosing, which are so well known that they need not be here pointed out, it is certain that the breed of stock would be thereby greatly improved. It has been long supposed, that the cattle raised on the inclosed farms in the occupation of the proprietors, are of a superior breed to those raised by the tenants in the adjoining open fields, because they are so greatly superior in weight and figure; but all this superiority is nothing more than the result of the ease, shelter, freedom, and more plentiful food with which they are supplied in these inclosures; accordingly it is found, that the small cattle raised by the poorest people in the district, when pastured but a few years in the meadows of England, attain near double their former size.

It is needless to resume the reflections on the mill restrictions, services and customs, or on the carriages and other labour exacted by the landlords. The experience of the whole landlords in the highest improved counties of Scotland, have demonstrated how much the annual returns of an estate are increased by abolishing every species of personal thralldom.

Although the sands of Cowbin, from the familiarity of the scene, may be disregarded by those in that vicinity, yet to every attentive stranger it exhibits a most singular landscape,
and

and while it recalls his idea of the past, it also excites apprehensions respecting its future encroachments. The Act of Parliament for the preservation of bent has proved an ineffectual check, as it is now currently pulled, and sold for thatching the houses in the country, and that with the tacit approbation at least of those proprietors whose interests are most deeply concerned. Planting broad belts of the quickest growing trees on the nearest uncovered ground, appears to be the most certain barrier that can be obtained, and this ground being in general deep and moist, would be favourable to the growth of such trees.

From the preceding report it will appear, that except the lands occupied by the proprietors, and by some few intelligent and respectable farmers, no improvements have taken place in the cultivation of the arable lands, yet still it is perfectly evident that the country is very capable of the highest cultivation; and though it is not probable, as has been already observed, that any general improvement can be established all at once, yet it is certain that the proprietors, and those in the management of their estates, have it much in their power gradually to introduce better modes of husbandry, which, it is humbly supposed, can best be effected by enlarging the size of the farms, granting leases of proper duration, adopting regular rotations of cropping, inclosing the lands, and building proper farm houses, without obliging the tenant to expend any part of his stock in procuring the necessary accommodation in these respects.

There are two gentlemen, Mr. FORBES of Culloden, and Mr. GORDON of Kinstarie, who are about to grant leases over their estates in this district. From their public spirit it is to be expected that they will not miss so favourable an opportunity of introducing a regular system of husbandry on their estates, which would not only secure the complete improvement of them, but also promote the general interests of the country, for unless some public spirited proprietors will
make

make such arrangements on their estates, and use some such measures as are here pointed out, the country must long remain in its present unimproved state; and it cannot be supposed that the present set of tenants, considering the circumstances under which they are placed, will ever adopt any spirited plan for the improvement of the country or of their own situation.

FORT GEORGE.

This Fort is situated on the point of Airderseer, near the middle of the northern boundary of this district. Government once proposed to build it at Inverness, at a place called the *Citadel*, or *Cromwell's Fort*; but the magistrates of Inverness demanded such a price for the ground, that the Duke of CUMBERLAND was offended, and ordered an inspection of the ground whereon it now stands to be made by some engineers, who reported that it would answer equally well with that at Inverness. Accordingly Government purchased the ground, and a large farm in the neighbourhood of it, from Mr. CAMPBELL of Calder. The works commenced in the year 1747, under the direction of General SKINNER. The estimate given in was 120,000*l.* but it is said to have cost upwards of 160,000*l.* It is a most regular fortification, and is the only one built in Britain according to a regular plan. It covers ten Scots acres. It does not appear to have had any considerable influence on the state of society in the country around; the market, however, which it has opened for several productions of the country, renders it an object of some consideration in an agricultural view. It might therefore be improper to conclude this report without taking some notice of this superb and expensive establishment.

THE END.



